



SARA-MANA INTERGROUP NEWSLETTER

Aug/Sept 2020

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aasrq.org

AA's WORK CONTINUES @ SARASOTA JAIL

County Jail held the first virtual AA meeting in South Florida

-- by Susan N.

We've all been concerned about the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on newcomers to our fellowship. Some of the people most isolated from our AA fellowship are people currently incarcerated. Sarasota County Jail was closed to outside AA volunteers starting in March. When the re-opening of the state started, meetings started up for 2 days, but the facility closed again to outside volunteers for the well-being of inmates and volunteers.

During our virtual Area 15 Corrections Committee meeting in early July, we heard from many AA districts throughout our South Florida Area; this includes everything south of Pasco, Polk and Okeechobee counties all the way south to Key West, the Caymans, the Virgin Islands and the Bahamas! The news was the same everywhere. There were no jails allowing any kind of AA meetings, including virtual meetings in their facilities at that time. Our AAs here in District 4 were the only ones in our (huge) area able to bring the message of AA to people incarcerated in a jail!

This June the Sarasota County Jail contacted our Women's Recovery Pod volunteer coordinator, Lisa G., to arrange for beginning virtual meetings to reach the people in jail during the pandemic. The jail set up a ZOOM meeting at the Women's Recovery Pod, and 2 AA volunteers participated in the first weekly meeting on Monday July 13th! There was a small group of AAs rotating to bring this weekly meeting into the Women's Recovery Pod. We were looking forward to the opportunity to expand to more meetings if the facility could find the resources to set up more times!

Why was the Sarasota County Jail the very first to provide virtual access for a meeting? Was it just luck, or is there something fundamentally different here? When I first got the opportunity to volunteer at the Women's Recovery Pod, I was amazed. I had volunteered in a jail up in Illinois, but this was completely different. During the orientation volunteers were treated as valuable members of a team. The women were so engaged in the meeting! When I picked up my Big Book to share a quote, they all got their own books and followed along!



Speaker at Sarasota County Jail's addiction recovery pod. Herald-Tribune staff photo/Thomas Bender/2017

There was an atmosphere of mutual support. I learned that the jail provides housing for women who want to be in recovery together in one area (pod). Lisa G., our volunteer coordinator, told me that before the Covid 19 closing, the jail had over 90 AA meetings monthly including Men's and the Women's Recovery Pod programs! How did our local AA volunteers get so much access to bring meetings into the jail?

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I have heard that the Sarasota County Jail has one of the most innovative programs in South Florida. Of course, much of this is 'an outside issue' for our volunteers, but these programs have helped to create the opportunity for so many AA meetings to reach people inside the jail. Lisi Brannen, QLife operations manager at The Salvation Army, provided more background on the development of the Recovery Pod programs.

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Best of

Dear Alkie,

"Alkie" is a long-time member of A.A. His comments are based on his own strength, hope, and experience and are not reflections of any official A.A. position or practice.

Q. Dear Alkie: Is there a course you take to become an A.A. member?

Alkie: In A.A. no one tells you how to live; they show you how to live.

Q. Dear Alkie: How do I find out if I should join A.A.?

Alkie: A person finds their identity by identifying in, not out, because without identification A.A. is just information.

Q. Dear Alkie: I've had a slip. Can I still be in A.A.?

Alkie: In A.A. we don't shoot our wounded; otherwise we'd all be dead. Instead we train them to become better soldiers.

Q. Dear Alkie: I've heard a lot about "God's will". Any tips on how I'll know?

Alkie: If three people offer you the same advice, it's probably God's will --or at least good advice!!

Q. Dear Alkie: I think you A.A. people are following me--you seem to know all about me!

Alkie: Alcoholics already know 85% of everything there is to know about one another before they meet, because to a greater or lesser degree, we've all shared the same feeling and experiences with alcohol. It's only our circumstances that differ.

Q. Dear Alkie: What's your success rate in helping others?

Alkie: I'm always at least 50% successful at helping others--because I am always helped!

Q. Dear Alkie: What have you gotten out of being in A.A.?

Alkie: A.A. has given me everything I used to drink for.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS

Bob S., Richmond, IN

Mid-summer, 1938, was a watershed period for the writing of our Big Book—it almost did not happen! Donations from the Rockefellers, Charles Towns, and others were helpful, but Bill Wilson's upcoming Big Book project remained on hold, even doubtful. Bill W. had written two pre-manuscript drafts: THERE IS A SOLUTION

(Chapter One) and BILL'S STORY (Chapter two) during the late spring months of that year—Please notice the reverse order. These chapters were only a beginning effort to publish a short book that could sell for a dollar (about \$18.00 today). Happily, Doctor Silkworth added, THE DOCTORS OPINION that July.

Bill had endured financial struggle for over a year and had become understandably discouraged. By early fall he had not written anything for three months—he finally stated: "I am not an author." However, his partner, Hank Parkhurst, convinced him that just a few more chapters were needed to justify the \$1.00 price. Hank's adamancy was successful! Bill began writing the next two chapters, MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM and WE AGNOSTICS ON September 15, 1938.

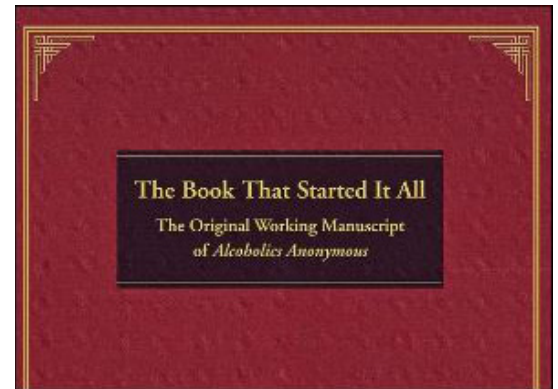
Thank God for Hank Parkhurst! I have always considered Hank and Ebby Thacher as two unsung heroes of AA history, although neither of them remained sober for timely periods. Bill may have made the touchdown, but Ebby handed him the ball and Hank became his inspiring, hard-driving coach!

Not to forget Jimmy Burwell who is given credit for "God as we understood Him."

By December, Bill had finished the manuscript including HOW IT WORKS, INTO ACTION, and WORKING WITH OTHERS, plus four other Chapters. Jim Scott helped write the Akron personal stories, and the NY stories were also included. But in early 1939, Tom Uzzell, editor of Colliers Magazine, reduced the manuscript dramatically, and a Dr. Howard (perhaps an alias) changed the tone from: "Thou must under pain of drunkenness," to "This is what we did."

The finished book was published in April of 1939. It sold for \$3.50.

So, Bill was gifted with many helpful friends as he constructed this marvelous life-saving book for us. Thank you, God!



**Central Office
is OPEN on
Wednesdays**

9:00-4:00

Masks are Required

SARASOTA COUNTY JAIL

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In 2009 the community group, Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity (SURE) in conjunction with the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, set a goal to implement a comprehensive substance abuse rehabilitation program in the county jail. It was decided to dedicate separate housing units (pods) for these rehabilitation programs. SURE and the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office approached The Salvation Army to provide a curriculum for these programs. This included partner organizations providing training in parenting, resume writing, job interview skills, G.E.D. work and life skills depending on the needs of the individuals participating. The people in the recovery pods have a busy day; participation is required for those who want to be in the program. The Salvation Army reached out to AA to provide volunteers for AA meetings within these pods. The first AA meetings in the recovery pod programs started in 2009. Due to the needs of the people in the jail, The Salvation Army later reached out to NA to provide meetings as well. Before those meetings started, there had been a weekly AA meeting for the general population, which continued after the recovery pods opened.

Lisi Brannen from The Salvation Army noted that "we are their guests" in the recovery pods. She shared with me that Sheriff Knight and his team have been very supportive of the recovery pods programs. Sgt. Nelson has said that they will not let this virus stop their program! There is pride in this program; Lisi called it "a movement that has changed Sarasota for the better! People are coming out of these programs and becoming outstanding citizens in our community."



Literature at Sarasota County Jail's addiction recovery pod. Herald-Tribune staff photo/Thomas Bender/2017

Our Hospitals and Institutions Committee (H&I), and Jail Volunteer Coordinators have worked directly with Corrections staff to help them understand what AA does and does not do in order to build a positive relationship. AA literature has been provided to corrections staff, including AA books and AA pamphlets, including those relating to our singleness of purpose. Some staff have worked to build a deeper understanding of AA principles and tools! Our volunteer coordinators have communicated with corrections staff and AA volunteers to resolve any difficulties, making sure we are effective 'guests in their house'. Over the years, our Public Information (PI) and Cooperation with the Professional Community Committees (CPC) have provided regular sessions to share with police and health professionals about the AA program of recovery. These have included speakers from AA and AA pamphlets; speakers from Al anon sometimes participate in these events as well. Of course there are hundreds of AA volunteers who have worked to make these programs a success!

The Covid 19 pandemic has provided us with some harsh circumstances, but also some opportunities. It is so great to see our community organizations support the work of recovery. I am inspired to see how the powerful combination of community support, years of hard work, communication, planning, patience, selfless AA service, and maybe a little 'luck' (thanks Higher Power!) had come together to let our volunteer program return to carry the message of AA inside the walls. On Monday August 10, we heard that ZOOM meetings to the jail are on hold until further notice. This is such disappointing news, and we anticipate starting again when it can be arranged.

Thank you so much to everyone who shared information for this article: Lisi Brannen, Lisa G, and Carol. Thank you so much to all our community organizations (SURE, The Salvation Army, The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, and Sarasota County Jail) who provide opportunities for AA service to happen! Thank you to the hundreds of AA volunteers who are working to make these programs a success in spite of any temporary barriers or setbacks!

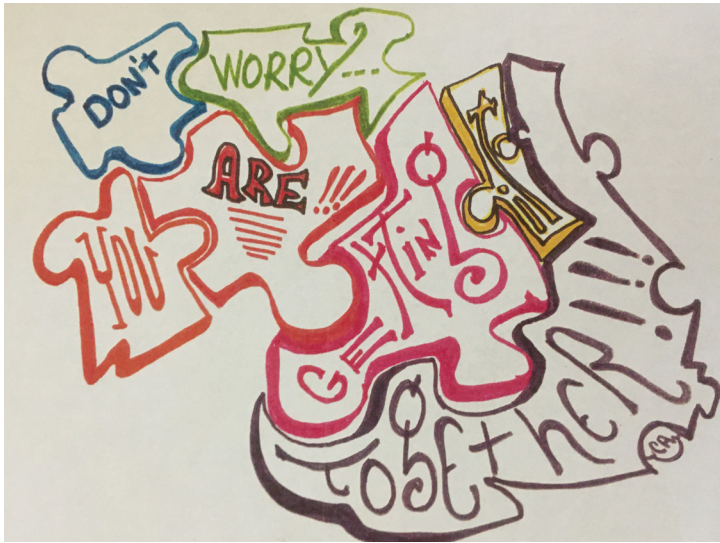
We look forward to starting virtual meetings at the jail and continuing to be creative and active in reaching out to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Accessabilities Announcements

Amotaudio.com has **free streaming speaker tapes**. 26 are ASL interpreted, and rest are hearing-only.

The Deaf Recovery Facebook group and the Deaf Alcoholics Anonymous Facebook group have lots of **ASL meeting details**. Some of the meetings are virus-only some are ongoing.

Jeanne T.



Submitted by Kathleen H. - WITS!

ANNIVERSARIES

Please email birthdays to newsletter@AAsrq.org, put **ANNIVERSARIES** in the subject line, and submit them typed in the body of an email or a Word file. Anniversaries appear the month after they occur (ie., September anniversaries will appear in the October edition). Deadline for submission of anniversaries is the 7th of each month.

Singleness of Purpose

May

Maureen A.	16 years
Marcia W.	28 years
Stacey S.	1 year
Craig C.	1 year
Tina C.	1 year
Doug G.	1 year
Courtney W.	5 years
Jon K.	6 years
Robert W.	29 years

June

Bill W.	5 years
Gayle K.	6 years
Jayne B.	1 year
Tom W.	11 years
Don P.	6 years
Jim M.	15 years
Karen P.	30 years

July

Sam H.	16 years
Kyle S.	1 year
Lynn M.	8 years
Bruce K.	1 year
Althea H.	27 years
Doug W.	8 years

63rd Ave Group

Rebecca B.	28 years
Skyway Bob	41 years

Women in the Solution

April

Linda P.	37 years
Molly M.	9 years

May

Cynthia M.	33 years
Kim R.N.	16 years

June

Kelli S.	3 years
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July

Dawn D.	19 years
Lorri C.	21 years

From My Journal

-- by Nancy B.



Being willing to... believe... begin a searching and fearless inventory... admit... make amends... carry the message... practice AA principles in all my affairs. Mainly it has been willingness that has brought me to the peaceful, content and grateful state that I enjoy now. When I came into AA, I was desperate for help to stop drinking. I had failed to do it on my own, and I had a willingness to do whatever it took. Compared to the robust willingness I have now (based upon success after success that AA provides through practicing our principles over and over), my early willingness was meek, uninformed and fragile. My sponsor and the circle of women who took me under their wings at meetings carried, supported and advised me, turning my fragile willingness into trust and faith; changed attitudes and behaviors; and sobriety. My conception of my HP includes its presence in other people whom it works through, and my experience in AA has proved that for me over and over. I am so grateful.

Meeting Guide



TO SUBMIT ITEMS TO THE NEWSLETTER: Anniversaries, articles and meeting notices should be sent to newsletter@aasrq.org. Submit material as attachments or placed directly into an email. Include your first name, group and type of item being sent. Deadline is the 7th day of the month. Submissions may be edited for length or content. The opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and not necessarily those of A.A., Sara-Mana Intergration or the Central Office.